

THE ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE

URBAN DISTRICT OF DRIFFIELD,

FOR THE YEAR 1898.

Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ending December 31st, 1898, including the statistical returns of the deaths in the district and the various measures adopted for the prevention of disease.

During the past twelve months there were registered, according to the monthly returns furnished by the Registrar, 142 births and 113 deaths.

Of the births, 73 were males and 69 females.

The birth-rate was equal to 23.1 per 1000, out of an estimated population of 6121.

Of the deaths 54 were males and 59 females, and out of this number 12 died in the Union Workhouse, as against 21 in 1897.

The annual death-rate per 1000 for the year under notice was 11.4, which corresponds closely with that of the preceding year.

The natural increase of population, as shown by the excess of births over deaths, amounts to 29 persons.

It has usually been the custom in past years to present in this report a general summary of the more important incidents that have occurred in connection with the public health, whenever such circumstances have arisen.

Upon a careful revision however of the monthly returns, which have been regularly presented and read before the Sanitary Authority, it does not appear there have been any conditions of such a prominent character as to call for any lengthy remarks.

The various matters that came under notice, and such as needed immediate attention, were dealt with at the time, or soon after their occurrence, and thus were finally disposed of.

About the beginning of the year an outbreak of Scarlet Fever amongst the children created some anxiety, although the epidemic abated without claiming many victims. Printed instructions were issued to the various heads of families amongst whom the malady appeared pointing out the best means to be adopted for preventing the spread of contagion; the re-opening of the public schools, after the Christmas holidays, was also postponed for a certain period, and thus by degrees the complaint gradually subsided.

Although a great advance has been made of late years in the progress of our knowledge respecting the source and origin of so-called epidemics, still many circumstances arise during such outbreaks that have hitherto baffled our means of observation.

Cases often present themselves where it is difficult to fix upon the precise cause. Atmospheric conditions, about which we are profoundly ignorant, also play an important part in propagating the spread of disease, and the varying susceptibility to be met with amongst individuals, all living under similar circumstances, is also a prominent feature to be considered during the course of our investigations.

Much also has yet to be learnt as to the best mode to be pursued for the destruction of germs, or the vital elements whatever these may be, that give a special character to each particular form of contagious disease.

So much has been stated in former years in reference to the drainage and water supply as to render it superfluous to make any special remarks on these topics. Our present arrangements, on the whole, have worked so satisfactorily, and may be regarded as being the best that can well be devised, as would render any material changes upon our present system hazardous and doubtful. When we bear in mind the serious difficulties that have arisen in many parts of the country, and the costly operation in which public bodies have been so often engaged in dealing

with these important questions, we have great cause to feel truly thankful we have been spared from similar misfortunes.

With a view of giving a general outline of the various duties that have been undertaken during the past year it may be convenient to present a summary of the several circumstances that have come under observation, and to describe the steps taken in the same order in which they have appeared and been recorded in the Monthly Journal.

By the adoption of this method it may perhaps be possible to avoid the repetition of similar remarks to those that have appeared in the annual reports of past years.

JANUARY.—A general inspection of the Urban District appears to have been made during this month and few localities have failed to come under observation, including the Lodging-houses and Filtration Area.

Reference was made to the fact that the houses situated in the poorer parts of the town were falling into disrepute, and a decided preference to those of a more modern type.

Visited the Public Schools which had only recently been re-opened since the Christmas holidays in consequence of illness prevailing amongst the children, mainly due to scarlatina. The cases had then become less frequent, and the epidemic was then subsiding.

The death-rate owing to this circumstance rose to the high figure of 27.7.

The month of January is apparently the time when the greatest mortality seems to prevail in this district for precisely the same number of deaths is recorded for this month in the year 1896.

FEBRUARY.—The usual details of Sanitary work were attended to during this month, including visits to the Public Schools and Filtration Area.

Several localities, more especially the poorer portions of our district, were inspected, likewise the two Linseed Cake Mills where a number of hands are regularly at work. No special conditions came under our notice as to need any action on the part of the Committee, and the various premises along our route were found to be in a fairly satisfactory state.

A vacant piece of ground which presented a forlorn and unsightly aspect was brought under the consideration of the Committee with the view of leading towards some future improvement. Death-rate 19.6.

MARCH.—In addition to the usual inspections the Cowsheds and Dairies from whence milk is sold came under our observation, and attention directed to the various defects that were often met with, and the difficulties we had to encounter in maintaining that high standard of efficiency it was desirable to reach.

The fact was strongly dwelt upon in the report that as milk had become an important part of our daily food, and was largely consumed by children, it ought never to be exposed to any risk of contamination, but be kept free from every chance of pollution.

There was still a considerable falling off in the attendance at our Public Schools owing, it was alleged, to the prevalence of sickness.

The Filtration Area and Union Workhouse were likewise visited this month.

Death-rate, 33.4.

APRIL.—Without going into minute detail it may be stated that the district situated at the northern extremity of our Area is the one that needs frequent attention, and, as we hope, is being brought up to a higher standard than it has hitherto reached.

Signs of progress however were distinctly visible in certain localities that were specially named in our report.

These indications will however be naturally slow, for many of the houses are not free from structural defects, and it is not easy to fix upon the precise share of responsibility that may rest respectively either upon landlord or tenant, neither of whom are too ready to undertake the repairs too often needed.

The Driffeld Waterworks were visited this month, and found to be in a satisfactory state. Death-rate, 17.7.

MAY.—Reference was made in the report for this month to the annoyance created by the large amount of dust, and other kinds of refuse, which was permitted to blow about the streets and thus finding their way into houses and passages, where they were by no means welcome.

The usual visits were also paid to the Public Schools and to the Filtration Area. As regards the latter, it was suggested that whenever practicable it was highly desirable to secure periods of rest in the trenches that are deemed so essential for their proper working, and the effectual purification of the sewerage.

Death-rate, 11.8.

JUNE.—Amongst other localities specified in the report the Lodging-houses came under our observation chiefly with a view of ascertaining whether they

were free from sickness, and the answer was that no case of illness had occurred amongst their casual occupiers for a considerable period.

We find such enquiries to be useful so as to protect the district against the invasion of contagious disease.

Of this we had a somewhat painful experience a few years ago which caused considerable anxiety and trouble.

The public health at this period was reported to be in a highly satisfactory state as indicated by the monthly return of the Registrar, only four deaths having been recorded, two of which had taken place in the Union Workhouse. Death-rate, 8.4.

JULY.—We were able to place upon record for this month, that after a period of unwonted activity which set in at the early part of the year, and due mainly to an outbreak of Scarlatina and Measles, to have then reached an interval of comparative calm, and to pronounce the health of the district to have again reached its former state.

The scarcity of rain to flush out the sewers, thus favouring the deposition of solid matter and making itself perceptible by the liberation of bad smells, was commented upon. Any defects in our drainage system quickly lead to urgent calls for prompt removal. Death-rate, 4.6.

AUGUST.—The usual localities were visited, including the two Linseed Cake Mills, during this month, and reference was made to the absence of those disorders generally associated with hot weather, such as autumnal Diarrhoea, which in past years was so prevalent in agricultural districts.

This latter circumstance may be partly due to the substitution of more wholesome and suitable beverages, in the place of those formerly in use, by those engaged in the operations of the harvest-field. Death-rate, 13.7.

SEPTEMBER.—The Lodging-houses, the Filtration Area and the Public Schools were each visited this month, and such features as attracted any special attention were noticed in the monthly report.

A case of Typhoid, apparently traceable to a defective pump where the water was exposed to the risk of pollution from an adjoining cesspool, was alluded to, and subsequently remedied.

As regards our Public Schools it may here be remarked that their sanitary arrangements are such as to leave nothing more to be desired, every consideration

being shown towards the health and comfort of the children who attend these institutions. Death-rate, 23.6.

OCTOBER.—In addition to several other localities the Slaughter-houses came under our observation and those we saw presented no features to call for any special remark.

Reference was also made in the report to the attention recently directed as to the tubercular disease being transmissible to individuals through the medium either of animal food or milk, where these articles had been derived from unhealthy sources, thus pointing to the need of such precautions being adopted as were likely to protect the public against such a risk.

Allusion was also made to the number of deaths from malignant disease, allied to cancer, that appeared in the monthly return. Death-rate, 13.7.

NOVEMBER.—A case of Typhoid, which proved fatal, was investigated, occurring to a young man going the round of the country, and was therefore not assignable to any local cause.

Our attention was again specially directed to the state in which some of the cowsheds were kept, as well as to the condition of the animals themselves, and in neither case were they (in some instances) found to come up to that state of strict cleanliness it is so desirable to maintain.

Some bye-laws were drawn up pointing out these defects, and were issued to the various cowkeepers, after being submitted to the approval of the Sanitary Committee. Death-rate, 19.7.

DECEMBER.—The recent heavy rainfall whilst highly important, as contributing to our future water supply from springs and wells, has also had the effect of filling up the trenches of the Filtration Area, and thus taxing the resources of this important part of our drainage system.

The usual visits were paid to certain parts of the Urban district, and reference made to the number of deaths for this month, due apparently to causes of a variable character, and mainly ascribed to malignant and tubercular complaints, together with senile decay. Death-rate, 29.5.

MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF DEATHS.

	Males.	Females.	Totals.
January	6	8	14
February	5	5	10
March	7	10	17
April	4	5	9
May	2	4	6
June	4	0	4
July	0	2	2
August	5	2	7
September	6	6	12
October	3	4	7
November	6	4	10
December	6	9	15
	54	59	113

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

RICHARD WOOD, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

Drifffield, January 30th, 1899.



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DRIFFIELD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Date of Next Meeting Thursday.

RY BOTTERILL,
SOLICITOR,
CLERK.

Driffield. Feb: 24 1899

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to state
that I am unable to
forward a copy of the
Annual Report for the
Rural District of Driffie
- as the Council owing
apparently to motives of
economy, decline to
incur the cost of having
it printed. - I enclose
Report for the Lrbace
district. I am yours
Respectfully
R. Wood.

